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ANNUAL REPORT
of the
Medical Officer of Health
and
Medical Officer for Maternity
and Child Welfare
of the
BOROUGH OF TAUNTON,
FOR THE YEAR 1945.

HAMMETT & COMPANY (TAUNTON) LTD.

Pubic Health Department,

St. Paul's House,

Taunton.

13th November, 1946

The Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses,
THE BOROUGH OF TAUNTON.

Mr. Mayor, Madam and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit an abridged annual report for the year 1945. This is prepared to comply with the requirements of the Ministry of Health in Circular 28,46.

The statistics for the year are generally satisfactory, the live birth rate was maintained at 18.7 per 1,000 population while the illegitimate birth rate which had been 2.3 per 1,000 in 1944 fell to 1.9.

The deaths of infants under one year were 40 per 1,000 live births as against 48.8 in 1944.

There was an epidemic of Measles in the early part of the year —549 cases notified but no deaths were attributed to this cause.

Overcrowding persists and gives cause for much uneasiness.

Diphtheria as a cause of death can be eliminated if parents would have their children protected at the age of 1 year and again at 5 years, but not more than 51 % of those under 5 years have had this in spite of every possible effort by this department.

I have to express my thanks to Alderman A. J. West, J.P., Chairman of the Maternity and Child Welfare and Public Health Committees for his continuing interest and support, and to record my appreciation of the work of the staff.

I am,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN ALLEN

Medical Officer of Health.

BOROUGH OF TAUNTON.

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the year 1945.

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS.

Registrar General's estimate of resident population	...	...	30,060
Number of inhabited houses at the end of 1945, according to the Rate Books (approximate)	...	...	8,075
Rateable Value at the end of 1944	...	...	£238,896
Estimated product of a penny rate	...	...	£944.4
• Births live and still number :—			
Male 277. Female 288. Total 565.			18.7
Births, live :—			
Male 266. Female 281. Total 547.		Rate per 1,000 population	18.0
Births, still :—			
Male 11. Female 7. Total 18.			0.7
Births illegitimate, live and still :—			
Male 35. Female 24. Total 59.			1.9
Deaths :—			
Male 155. Female 206. Total 361.			12.0
Infant Mortality Deaths :—			
Male 10. Female 12. Total 22..			
Infant Mortality Rate per 1,000 live births	...	...	40.2
Infant Mortality Rate legitimate per 1,000 leg. live births	...	...	38.6
Infant Mortality Rate Illegitimate per 1,000 illeg. live births	...	...	54.5
Neonatal Mortality Rate, deaths under one month per 1,000 live births	...	...	23.0
Deaths per 1,000 live births from diarrhoea in infants under 2 years of age			5.3

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES

Maternity and Child Welfare. This was similar to 1944, but the occupation of temporary premises in North Street Sunday School ceased on 24th August and the Health Centre at St. Paul's House was re-occupied after its use as a First Aid Post during the war years.

Ante-Natal Clinic. On Monday and Wednesday afternoon. The number of mothers who attended for examination prior to confinement was 282, and after confinement was 21 ; while 19 mothers who had booked a midwife for their confinement were referred to a private practitioner for ante-natal examination.

Home Helps. It was not possible owing to the lack of female labour to make any definite arrangement to provide assistance of this kind or to provide any help for domestic assistance. One helper was provided for a nursing mother for a period of two weeks.

Obstetric Consultant. This service was provided at the request of the doctor attending for 12 cases ; four being seen at their own home or in the Maternity Home and 8 at the Consultant's rooms. A brief report is furnished on each case seen.

Maternity Home. 10 beds (including 1 isolation). The number of women admitted was 215 including 5 specially admitted for antenatal care. With co-operation of the County Health Department, 10 women who could not be admitted owing to lack of beds were sent—8 to Tetton and 2 to Bridgwater.

Complicated Maternity Cases. 54 cases with complications were admitted from the Borough to the Taunton and Somerset Hospital.

Infant Welfare Centres. There are two—one in temporary premises at North Street Sunday School open on Tuesday and Thursday from 2 until 4 p.m. and removed thence to the Health Centre at St. Paul's House in August, and the other at Halcon Chapel on Wednesday afternoons. Total consultations numbered 5,307 with 421 new infants brought to the centre for the first time, so that over 76% of the registered live births attended.

Work of the Health Visitors. There are three Health Visitors who also act as Child Life Protection Visitors (for the supervision of foster children) and as School Nurses. About one half of their time is given to Maternity and Child Welfare.

They made 316 visits to expectant mothers in their homes, 2,914 visits to children under one year of age and 1,931 visits to children between one and five years of age.

Puerperal Pyrexia. The special unit consisting of cubicles in the Taunton and District Isolation Hospital for the treatment of cases of this condition has continued to be of the greatest benefit. Twenty cases were notified ; sixteen of these were admitted to the special unit and two others—one being a carrier of haemolytic streptococci and the other suffering from venereal disease.

Fruit Juices and Cod Liver Oil. The distribution of these essential products at the Infant Welfare Centres has continued ; a part time helper being specially engaged for this purpose. There is no restriction of these to residents in the town so that it is not possible to give any estimate of the quantities taken by mothers and children in the Borough. There was some diminution in take up following the removal from North Street to St. Paul's House, the temporary premises being no doubt more conveniently situated for this purpose.

War-time Day Nursery. 45 places—(for 0-2 years, 14 ; and 2-5 years, 31). The demand for accomodation has been maintained and exceeds the space available. No child is admitted unless protection against Diphtheria has been effected or is agreed to, while the mother must be working. Special consideration is given to those whose need is greatest.

The Care of Illegitimate Children. Illegitimate births in 1945 numbered 59, (55 live and 4 still), equal to an illegitimate birth rate of 1.9 per 1,000 population. Three of these died under 1 year of age. A scheme for the co-operation of the Taunton and District Society for the Welfare of Women and Girls who employ a whole time welfare worker and the payment of annual grant of £104 a year continued.

Reports on the cases dealt with are submitted at the end of each quarter by the Welfare Worker. Seven illegitimate children were, with the co-operation of the Somerset County Council, admitted to residential nurseries, while a considerable proportion of the children under two years of age attending the Day Nursery were illegitimate.

The Care of Premature Infants. The arrangements which it had been found possible to make in 1944 were continued. These include particulars, if of $5\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. in weight or under on the birth notification form, and retention for a suitable period in the Maternity Home or Taunton and Somerset Hospital, and notification to this department prior to their discharge.

Out of 547 live births 52 were of $5\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. weight or under ; of these 7 died during the first twenty four hours of life and two others within the first week of life, a total of nine out of the 52 premature births.

Two premature infants born at home were taken into the Maternity Home ; one for 26 and the other for 25 days, while one born in the Maternity Home was retained for 21 days.

Supply of Sheets for Expectant Mothers. A scheme for the issue of dockets to expectant mothers enabling them to buy up to three sheets at the controlled price and free of purchase tax where the midwife booked for the confinement certifies the need of these was put into operation on 1st December, 1944 and continued during 1945 when 257 dockets were sent to 116 expectant mothers.

Promotion of Cleanliness and Elimination of Verminous Conditions. The three Health Visitors (who are also School Nurses) pay special attention to children under five years especially where an elder member of the same family has been found unclean in school. Infestation by body lice is seldom seen but members of a few families are frequently found to have head lice. A new preparation, an emulsion, containing D.D.T. has been used for this purpose. One application to the scalp maintains its effect for a period of at least 14 days even if the hair is washed.

As regards Scabies—this disease is still with us although the number of cases found has diminished. A Unit for the out-patient treatment of cases has been provided at Belmont Sick Bay. It was open for women and children from 2 until 4 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and for men on Tuesday at 7 p.m. The number of cases having decreased it was decided to reduce the number of openings from 4th September. After this date it was open only on Tuesdays and Fridays from 2 p.m. and the special evening clinic for men ceased.

The number of cases treated was 314, of which 271 were from the Borough. Attendances for treatment numbered 833, of which 717 were from the Borough.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA

Water Supply. A brief description of the sources of supply and methods of treatment was given on page three of my report for 1944. These are unchanged.

1. The supply has been satisfactory in quantity—there being no curtailment during the period.
2. Fifty three samples of main tap water were taken at approximately weekly intervals and sent to the County Bacteriologist for examination. Samples of the raw water entering the Filtration Plant at Fulwood and of the treated water at Fulwood were taken at fortnightly intervals to check the bacterial content of the raw water ; the effect of treatment on this and the amount of residual chlorine, twenty six of these were taken.

The main tap samples showed no excretal *B. coli* present in 50 c.c. on 51 occasions—one sample showed *B. coli* present in 10 c.c. and another *B. coli* present in 30 c.c. Samples were also taken at approximately monthly intervals from Leigh Reservoir where a filtered and chlorinated supply is provided for parts of the Taunton Rural District. All of the twelve samples showed no *B. coli* present in 50 c.c.

The County Analyst, Mr. D. R. Wood gave the following chemical analysis on a main tap sample taken on 28th August—all in parts per 100,000.

Physical Characters ...	...	...	...	Clear and bright.
Reaction ...	...	...	...	Slightly alkaline. ph 7.2
Alkalinity (as CaCO ₃)	...	...	...	7.5
Total hardness	...	...	...	9.0
(a) permanent	...	...	...	4.5
(b) temporary	...	...	...	4.5
Chlorine, (in terms of sodium chloride)	...	...	2.5	

As this water is chloraminated, any attempt to determine the amount of ammonia present and oxygen absorbed would only give a misleading result.

Free Carbon Dioxide	...	...	...	0.7
Sediment	...	...	...	Nil

3. The water has a slight plumbo-solvent action.

4. There are approximately 8,075 inhabited houses in the town and all of these except 51 were supplied from public water mains direct to the houses. Of the 51 not so supplied, 46 were condemned houses in confirmed Clearance Orders occupied either by evacuees or under licence—four were supplied from two wells and one from a spring.

Milk Supply. The Government scheme for the rationalization of the distribution came into force on 1st December, 1942 and continued during the year, but Regulations made in 1943 which were to restrict the sale of raw milk in certain areas have not yet been put into force which is unsatisfactory. Pasteurized milk was produced from three premises—a new producer commenced operation on 1st October. Samples were taken at approximately weekly intervals to check the efficiency of pasteurization by the phosphatase test and the bacterial content. Of the 106 samples taken 104 complied with the tests for sufficient heat treatment. As regards raw milk there are in the Borough, five registered dairy farms and 27 retailers.

Notifiable Infectious Disease. Apart from an epidemic of Measles in the first half of the year there was no undue prevalence of any infectious disease. The number of cases of certain infectious diseases notified, the rate per 1,000 population and comparable rates for similar sized towns in England and Wales were :—

Disease	No.	Smaller towns	
		Taunton Rates per 1,000	Rates per 1,000 population
Typhoid Fever	Nil	Nil	0.01
Paratyphoid Fever	Nil	Nil	0.01
Cerebro Spinal Fever	1	0.02	0.05
Scarlet Fever	33	1.09	2.03
Whooping Cough	48	1.59	1.47
Diphtheria	5	0.16	0.56
Erysipelas	14	0.46	0.24
Measles	549	18.2	11.19
Pneumonia	8	0.26	0.72
		rates per 1,000 live and still births	
Puerperal Pyrexia	20	35.4	8.81
Maternal Mortality	1	1.7	1.46

The Prevention of Diphtheria. There were no deaths from this cause during the year, but in spite of continuous and sustained efforts by all members of this department it was calculated that on the 31st December only 519 of the children under 5 years of age had been protected by immunisation. As regards the 5-15 year age group, 76% had been protected. It appears that little extra response is caused by propaganda in the press and on hoardings and that personal interrogation of parents by myself and the Health Visitors is fruitful, while a propaganda film shown in the cinemas has an immediate response in increasing attendances.

Refuse Collection and Disposal. It was still only possible owing to lack of man power and vehicles to collect household refuse at fortnightly intervals, while the lack of combustible material in it made it impossible to destroy this by fire, and it was dumped on ground adjacent to the Sewage Works.

